

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 NSC-05 MC-02 H-02 OMB-01 /068 W

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R 051802Z EAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9594

SECDEF

INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

CINCUSAFE

USNMR SHAPE

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03527

DEFENSE FOR IQA. ODDR&E. CSAF. OSAF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR. BEXP, AWACS. UK, NATO

SUBJ: AEW/AWACS - ANOTHER COMMENT FROM A BRITISH MP

REF: LONDON 3081

1. THE FOLLOWING LETTER APPEARED IN THE TIMES OF 3/4/76

FROM PHILIP GMODHART, CONSERVATIVE MP FOR BROMLEY, BECKENHAM:

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"IN HIS INFORMATIVE ARTICLE .WE MUST NOT WELSH ON
NATO'S EARLY WARNING SYSTEM' (FEBRUARY 26), MY COLLEAGUE
JULIAN CRITCHLEY TELLS US THAT THE U.S. SECRETARY FOR
DEFENCE GAVE THE GO-AHEAD IN FEBRUARY L975 FOR THE PUR-
CHASE OF THE OEING AIRBORNE WARNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM
FOR THE DEFENCE OF NORTH AMERICA. BEFORE PRODUCTION BEGAN
THE AMERICAN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE HAD SPENT AS MUCH
MONEY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AWACS AS GREAT BRITAIN HAS
SPENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONCORDE.

"THE AMERICAN SENATE, HOWEVER, HAS VIEWED THE WHOLE
AWACS PROJECT WITH CONSIDERABLE SCEPTICISM AND THE ORDERS
FOR AMERICA'S OWN AIR DEFENCE HAVE BEEN CUT TO THE BONE
AND BEYOND. SMME OF THE CONGRESSIONAL CRITICISM OF THIS
ENORMOUSLY EXPENSIVE PROJECT HAS PROVED TO BE UN-
FOUNDED, BUT THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH THE AMERICAN
AIR FORCE CAN PERSUADE CONGRESS TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY
FUNDS IS TO GET AMERICA'S EUROPEAN ALLIES INTERESTED IN
THE PROJECT.

"FOR EUPOEAN COUNTRIES THIS IS NOT AN UNUSUAL SIT-
UATION. WE KNOW FROM BITTER EXPERIENCE THAT ANY IMPORTANT
DEFENCE PROJECT STANDS A BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVING
SUCCESSIVE DEFENCE CUTS IF IT IS A MULTINATIONAL PROJECT,
SUCH AS THE MRCA, THAN IT DOES IF IT IS A DEVELOPMENT
UNDERTAKEN BY ONE COUNTRY ALONE -- SUCH AS TSR2. DIPLO-
MATIC PRESSURES ENSURE THAT MULTINATIONAL PROJECTS SUR-
VIVE LONGER. THE AWACS CONTROVERSY IS INTERESTING, HOW-
EVER, BECAUSE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE AMERICAN
DEFENCE DEPARTMENT HAS HAD TO ADAPT THIS PARTICULAR PLOY
ANO ATTEMPT TM WIN OVER CONGRESSIONAL OPINION BY CONVERT-
ING AWACS INTO A MULTINATIONAL PROJECT.

"THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT SENIOR NATO COMMANDERS
WANT TO SEE AWACS ADOPTED BY THE ALLIANCE. IT IS MORE
FLEXIBLE AND TECHNOLOGICALLY INTERESTING THAN RIVAL SYS-
TEMS AND IT CAN BE DEVELOPED STILL FURTHER -- WHICH MEANS
OF COURSE THAT IT CAN BECOME MORE EXPENSIVE. ON THE OTHER
HAND IT HAS BEEN ARGUED THAT THE GRUMMAN HAWKEYE E-2C CAN
DO 80 PERCENT OF THE JOB AT A QUARTER OF THE COST. AND
THEN, AS MY COLLEAGUE GEOFFREY PATTIE FORCIBLY POINTED
OUT IN YOUR CMLUMNS ON FEBRUARY 12, THE HAWKER SIDDELEY

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NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

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MARCONI ELLIOTT NIMROD PROJECT MUST ALSO BE CONSIDERED.

"MINISTERS AND POLITICIANS ARE IN NO POSITION TO
PASS JUDGMENT ON THE TECHNICAL MERITS OF THE RIVAL SYS-
TEMS, BUT BEFORE WE DO COMMIT OURSELVES TO A PROGRAMME
COSTING AT LEAST POUNDS 900 MILLION, WE MUST BE SURE THAT
THE RIGHT QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED AND THAT THE EXTRA
CAPABILITY OF AWACS IS WORTH THE ENORMOUS EXTRA COST.

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"THERE ARE UNDERSTANDABLE PRESSURES FROM THE AMERI-

CAN DEFENCE DEPARTMENT AND THE PRINCIPAL AMERICAN CONTRACTOR OR BOEING TO GET A FAVORABLE DECISION AT THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING IN MAY. BUT IF THERE ARE BY THEN CONTINUING DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER THE RIGHT QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED AND ANSWERED, THE ARGUMENT FOR POSTPONING A DECISION WOULD BE VERY STRONG."

2. COMMENT: "CLIFF" CORNFORD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVE, MOD, DREW OUR ATTENTION TO THIS LETTER REFLECTING THAT "THERE IS SOME TRUTH" IN GOODHART'S OBSERVATIONS. GOODHART IS AN ABLE MP WITH A SOLID REPUTATION IN THE PARTY, WHO HAS, ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, SPOKEN OUT ON DEFENSE ISSUES. "RESPECTABLY" PRO-AMERICAN ON MANY DEFENSE MATTERS, GOODHART'S LETTER USEFULLY COMPLEMENTS AND "BALANCES (FROM A BRITISH POLITICAL/INDUSTRY VIEW-POINT) THE STRONGLY PRO-AWACS THRUST OF THE CRITCHLEY ARTICLE WHICH, SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS SO PRO-AWACS, COULD BE DISCOUNTED BY THE SCEPTICAL.

ARMSTRONG

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